

Samuel Guild "Lightning Splitter" House  
53 Transit Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-258

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
155-

PHOTOGRAPH  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-258

## SAMUEL GUILD "LIGHTNING SPLITTER" HOUSE

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RI,  
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Present Address: 53 Transit Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island.

Plat 16, Lot 129. 22 Transit Street in 1863.

Present Owners: Joseph H. and Elizabeth Solomon.

Present Occupant: James A. Howell.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is an example of a small, simple, frame house of the mid-nineteenth century, with an unusually steep roof, which has given it its name of "Lightning Splitter" house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1798 CHACE lists this property as belonging to Daniel Pearce [Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914)].
- 1844 Peter Cutler and Sally Cooke Cutler sell for \$328 to Samuel Guild, Grocer, a certain lot of land with buildings and improvements thereon Bounded: N by Transit Street 30'; E by Daniel Stillwell 80'; S by Godfrey and Powers 30'; and W by Caleb Godfrey...Deed Book 89, page 93, in Providence City Hall.
- 1863 Lydia Guild releases to her children..."Also another house at #22 Transit Street"...Deed Book 164, page 156, in Providence City Hall.
- 1863 George Guild et al in consideration of release of even date by Lydia Guild in the estate of Samuel Guild, give her the exclusive use of the two upper stories in #22 Transit Street, being part of the estate of Samuel Guild...also right in common of the basement room in said house for the rest of her natural life...Deed Book 164, page 468, in Providence City Hall.
- 1869 Property was taxed to George W. Guild and was in the Guild family from 1844 until 1911.

- 1911 William H. G. Temple and Olive G. Temple (nee Guild) sell to Gorham Co., Inc., the same property conveyed by Peter and Sarah Cooke Cutler to Samuel Guild in 1844 (Deed Book 89, page 93) bounded N by Transit Street 30'; E by E. Harrington 80'; S by I. Sanders; W by Olive Gorham 80'...Deed Book 519, page 249, in Providence City Hall.  
Property changed ownership several times, and was taxed to the following persons in the year designated:
- 1922 Walter G. Nichols  
1922 William O'Connor and wife Alice  
1931 William O'Connor and wife Minnie  
1952 Joseph H. Solomon and wife Elizabeth

- B. Date of erection: The date of erection is not clear from the documents, but the house was probably built for Samuel Guild shortly after he acquired the property in 1844.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
May 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an example of a small, simple, frame house of the mid-nineteenth century, with an unusually steep roof.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 15' (north front) x 30'; one-and-a-half stories high with basement at ground level on west and south.
2. Foundations: Fieldstone, plastered over.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame. Exterior now covered with asphalt shingles.
4. Chimneys: One brick chimney.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Modern.

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b. Windows: Double-hung windows, six-light sash.

6. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Steeply pitched gable roof, covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: Shallow molded eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Entrance and stair hall at northwest corner, front and center rooms divided by center chimney. Kitchen at southwest, bathroom at southeast, three rooms ranged one behind the other on second floor. Basement rooms at ground level at west side.

2. Stairways: Modern, probably in original location.

3. Flooring: Original wide board floors in many parts.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Interior finish completely removed; rough, heavy timber frame exposed. All trim modern. 7-1/2' ceiling height.

5. Lighting: Electric.

6. Heating: Modern central heat. Chimney with fireplaces divides front and center rooms. Chimney finish removed and rough brick work exposed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Faces north on small lot on sidewalk line. Small garden at basement level on west and south sides.

2. Enclosures: Modern wood fence.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby  
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